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humor and juvenility in Thoreau that until his last illness he never quite outgrew."

It is a little to be regretted, perhaps, that the *Life* as a whole is not more consecutively interesting; yet the materials contained in it, if presented rather dryly and with many digressions, are handled with skill and uniform good taste. Though one craves occasionally a little more illumination—a little more sense of reality as distinct from facts—the knowledge that the work as a whole is substantially complete, and that every statement and allusion has been understandingly weighed by a friend and contemporary of Thoreau compensates for any slight literary defects.

The narrative chapters of the work deal fully with the boyhood and youth of Thoreau, with the school-teaching and pencil-making experiences of Henry and his brother John, with "The Week on the River," with the journeyings of Thoreau (including the Minnesota notebook), with his relation to slavery and John Brown. Other chapters, of a more general nature, contain interesting discussions of Thoreau in literature, of his symbolism and paradox, of Thoreau as a friend and neighbor, as a man of letters and of affairs. Particularly rewarding is a chapter of "Village Sketches," mostly from the journals. Throughout the book are passages of Thoreau's verse and prose, hitherto unprinted or unfamiliar, which sound the characteristic note quite as effectively as do some of his better known writings, and in some cases reveal more familiarly than those the mental processes of the writer.

GREEK IDEALS. By C. DELISLE BURNS. London: G. Bell & Sons, Ltd., 1917.

So indefinite in meaning are the words *ideal* and *ideals* in common usage that one may quite naturally fall into the error of reading the first half of the book *Greek Ideals*, by C. Delisle Burns, as if it were meant to be an intensive study of Greek society. Indeed, the purpose and character of the book would perhaps be clearer to most readers if the volume were entitled "Athenian Moral Conceptions" or "Athenian Ethics." For the author aims, in fact, at edification rather than instruction in the narrower sense, and the treatise is really an ethical discourse with an Athenian color. It is too easy, however, to mistake it for the work of one who has simply rediscovered the "reality" and interest which inhere in Greek life and customs; and this is unfortunate, for to one who is fairly familiar with Greek literature, and has read Mahaffy on Greek life and Frazer on ancient religions, the first part of the book offers nothing new. It has, indeed, the defect of being rather too diffuse for scholars while demanding a little too much from the reader unversed in Greek.

By this one does not mean to imply that the chapters upon Greek religion and politics and upon the epic tradition are superfluous. They form, on the contrary, an integral part of the author's design. For the study of ideals is not, of course, merely a matter of abstract reasoning. Every ideal which has moved large numbers of men has had an emotional background in tradition and custom, and it is this background which explains at once the effectiveness of the ideal and its limitations. Thus, in order to obtain a real grasp of what was best in Greek thought it is not enough to study Plato and Aristotle: it is necessary to know Greek life.

These chapters, then (I-VII), of the book under review, have their use as painting in the necessary background—giving point to the Greek sentiments, especially, of liberty and friendship, and enabling one to understand the criticisms formulated by the philosophers. What they chiefly accomplish is to impress upon the reader's mind the Athenian conception of the *polis* as differing fundamentally from the German conception of the State and from the American idea of Government, in that, without being absolute, the *polis* included in a bond of sentiment all sorts of energies, religious and secular; so that the distinction between politics and religion, or between political and religious life on the one hand and "private" life on the other, was not in the Athenian mind very deep or important.

With the eighth chapter the discussion acquires a keener interest and a surer appeal; for here a certain psychological acumen with which the author is rather unusually gifted comes strongly into play. The analysis of the Athenian thinker of "the old school"—a school that we have always with us—is both just and humorously acute, while it shows clearly the effect upon minds of this type, of the Athenian tradition, as compared with the influence of—let us say—Puritanism.

This leads up to a consideration of Socrates, the sharp critic of superficial, traditional modes of thought, and the ardent lover of the realities that he discerned in the traditional ways. He has been represented by some, remarks the author, as much further in advance of his day than he really was, while others have thought him "as inconsistent as a modern liberal theologian." In point of fact, while he, no more than Luther or Erasmus or any other thinker who ever lived, could detach himself from the past or would have been of any value to his generation if he could have done so, his criticism was fundamental. By citations from Aristophanes and other Greek writers of the time, and by well-chosen modern parallels, the author shows just why it was that the teaching of Socrates was so disturbing to the conventionally minded "for-God's-sake-leave-me-in-peace" good citizen of his time and city.

There follows a somewhat detailed account of the doctrines of Socrates and Plato and of Aristotle, which amounts in itself to a very fine sifting of Greek ideals, the author's part being confined

for the most part to reminding the reader of those facts of tradition or environment which one must keep in view in order to avoid total misapprehensions as to what the philosophers actually meant. It is only, for example, when one remembers the Athenian conception of the *polis* that one escapes from the error of supposing that Plato in his *Republic* wrote himself down as a foe of liberty. For the outcome of the idea of coöperation which was embodied in the *polis* became, when criticized by the philosophers, the conception of liberty as a voluntary obedience to the dictates of the higher reason. If the argument advanced by Socrates, that all men are willing to do what is right as soon as they perceive that it is right, seemed conclusive, it was also natural to suppose that no one would refuse to do what the guardians of the ideal Republic directed, any more than an Athenian would be likely to decline an appointment as leader of a chorus.

In the main an excellent description and a somewhat penetrating analysis of Greek moral ideas, the book is occasionally marred by a certain looseness of statement. It seems to be, for instance, a considerable exaggeration to say that "Socrates never really freed himself from the burden of inherited custom and contemporary creeds," and the force of this assertion is not fully justified by anything that follows. Again it is not easy to determine just how much the author means by the unqualified statement that Socrates belonged to a religious brotherhood—the only proof cited being certain indications that there was an inner circle of disciples, with (possibly) "Pythagorean and Orphic connections." A similar indefiniteness affects the contention that "the Socrates of Plato is the historic Socrates." Although the author in one passage seems to adopt the extreme view that Plato was a "mere Boswell," it is not altogether clear that he would really deny to Plato any originality whatever. Certainly, there is distressing ambiguity in the argument that "only if the Platonic Socrates is the real Socrates can we explain the immense effect of Socrates upon later thinkers, some of whom were not at all Platonic?"

Such faults as have been mentioned do not, however, diminish the principal value of the book, which consists in its emphasis upon certain moral values—an emphasis secured in the only right way; that is, by placing these conceptions of value in their true setting. Particularly wholesome and clarifying is the chapter entitled "Plato on Right Action," in which it is shown that "Socrates and Plato were really opposing the two entirely inconsistent views, that (1) nobody really knows what is right, and that (2) we know it already!" It is still true, no doubt, that much of what we call wickedness is a wilful refusal to think, while moral relativism and political subjectivism are at least as common in America as they were in Athens. But if the greatest lesson, for us, of Greek thought, as it comes to us through the philosophers, is the true (moral) value

of reasoning, one may also find even in the older tradition, emotionally colored conceptions of freedom, of beauty, and of friendship, which the individual may in some sort take to himself.

ALGERNON CHARLES SWINBURNE. By MRS. DISNEY LEITH. New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1917.

If one needs to discover that the poet Algernon Charles Swinburne, author of a number of verses that not unjustifiably shocked staid British opinion, and of many poems unsurpassed in passion and artistry, was, after all, a very normal, unaffected and human sort of person in relation to his friends and family, then assuredly the book of reminiscences and letters recently published over the name of Swinburne's cousin, Mrs. Disney Leith, is a book that one ought to read. Indeed, it seems as if the letters, in particular, had been selected partly with a view to counteracting any conception that the general public may still retain of Swinburne as a morbid, hyperaesthetic or extravagantly eccentric man. However this may be, it is certain that in this volume a veil is dropped which is hardly more than drawn aside even in the admirable *Life and Letters of Watts-Dunton*. To Mrs. Disney Leith, the poet was "as an elder brother, a loved and sympathetic playmate as in later years a loyal and affectionate friend." To her was revealed, one may suppose, the simplest and friendliest side of the poet's nature as well as much of the poetic feeling of the "elder brother." Thus she is able to make plain to her readers that Swinburne could not infrequently take delight in sheer nonsense, in family jokes, in *bouts rimés*, and in Limericks (wherein he excelled), and that his love of swimming and tramping and climbing was as much in the way of being pure boyishness as it was the result of the poet's craving for new thrills or new beauties. Swinburne, as a boy, climbed up the sheer face of Culver Cliff, obviously, like any boy, to test his nerve; though his extravagant daring in selecting that particular cliff, and also his thoughts on the way up, indicated exceptional traits.

But if one is unaffected by the mythical and anecdotal view of Swinburne—if what one chiefly wants is greater insight into the poet's art and his ways of thinking and feeling, the present volume may prove unsatisfying. Apart from the refreshing little chapter of personal recollections with which it begins, the book is made up entirely of letters for the most part upon every-day topics that are little adapted to display even by indirection any unusual powers of intellect or to betray any individual weaknesses. The letters—written mostly to his mother—show the good son, the ardent champion of republicanism, the lover of nature, and the right-minded, whole-hearted man, of unfevered pulse and clear conscience.